

## **ESYO Student Eligibility Policy: Overview**

### **April 23, 2019**

- ESYO has a long history of supporting school music programs by requiring participants to take music classes in their schools, when and where they are available. The intention of this policy has been to avoid competition with school programs; ideally, we would like young musicians in our community to be enrolled both our programs and their school programs, since we all benefit from robust, vibrant music programs in our schools.
- Due to a combination of state and federal laws regarding instructional time and state and local laws regarding student funding, school districts in Oregon have faced challenges in maintaining school music programs over the years, and many school districts have been confronted with difficult choices that have ultimately resulted in fewer options for students to study music, particularly with regard to orchestra programs.
- In the Eugene-Springfield community, some high schools have adopted a 5-period day, and have moved orchestra classes to “zero period” (before school officially begins) in order to avoid schedule conflicts. While we appreciate the intention behind this decision, students and their families are increasingly reporting to us that this “zero period” option is not feasible or sustainable for them, for a variety of reasons.
- Because not all schools in our area offer orchestra classes, our policy of requiring students to participate in their school music programs is inequitable, particularly for the students whose only option is to take orchestra during zero period, because this adds up to 200 additional hours at school for them per year, or 800 hours throughout high school.
- Due to transportation challenges, not all students are able to arrive at school early in time for zero period classes, which creates further inequity.
- The ESYO Board of Directors recognizes that teenagers require more sleep in their high school years and that they are biologically wired to wake up later as a result. Their physical and mental health depends heavily on whether they receive adequate sleep.
- We also recognize that the National Association of Music Educators recommends that music classes be offered during the school day and be taught by licensed music educators; we agree with these guiding principles.
- ESYO and local school districts share the goal of strengthening and expanding music education programs, and we have a particular interest in orchestra programs, which are not currently offered at every secondary school in our community. ESYO would like to continue working with school districts to increase demand for orchestra classes by providing greater support during the school day as well as through after school programs that help introduce students to playing a musical instrument and build musicianship.
- For all of these reasons, after extensive research and consideration as well as dialogue with teachers and administrators, we will offer an exemption to our policy for high school students whose only option to take orchestra is in zero period for the 2019-20 school year. We will re-evaluate this policy before the 2020-21 school year.
- We will still expect students at other schools (i.e., middle schools, or high schools that offer orchestra during the school day) to register for music classes. However, we will also continue to review individual exemption requests through a committee of board members who will maintain student confidentiality.
- We are particularly interested in bridging the gaps that currently exist in our area, working towards better articulation in school orchestra programs, so that more kids have the option of taking orchestra all the way from 6th grade to 12th grade.